
Music Division

VA Staff: Keep track of all Veterans who compete/enter through your VA facility and enter their information into **Local Level Participation form on page 14 of the handbook**. **Send this form to Arts4Vets@va.gov when your local competition has ended.**

Facilities may submit the top three finalists in each category. A formal competition is not required at the local level but is strongly encouraged. All eligible Veterans should be given the opportunity to participate regardless of degree of talent.

All first place medal winners in the dance, drama and music divisions at the national level of competition will be invited to attend and participate as chorus members in the live stage show performance at the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

Note: Not all gold medal winners will be asked to perform their entry in the show. Due to time constraints, the Festival show directors will choose approximately 25 dance, drama, and music gold medal entries to perform their entry. The remaining gold medalists will be invited to participate in the Festival chorus.

Tips for Taking Better Video Recordings

Please take a few extra minutes preparing a video correctly to give your Veteran the best chance possible during the judging process and to save hours of time with the judging process for our judges who donate their time.

- **Be sure to check that all videos play with video and audio before submission.**
- **Focus on the performer**, not the accompanists. Avoid taping from the back of the room. Stage presence cannot be judged if you cannot clearly see the performer.
- When video recording dance acts, it is necessary to include the whole-body in the entire recording, including the feet.
- **Sound control** is important! Clear audio makes a performance much easier (and enjoyable) to judge. Make sure your sound is good and balanced. Be aware of the background/accompaniment being too loud. Oftentimes we see/hear the speaker/player is next to the video camera and it is difficult to hear the performer.
- Consider holding your local competition and then video recording **ONLY** the acts that will be sent forward for national judging.
- **Dance, drama, and music entries** will be accepted digitally (MP4, WMV, MOV) through the Arts4Vets App.
- **TITLE PAGE** – Each entry must have a title page displayed prior to the entry being shown. The title page should include the Category and the Title of the Entry. The title page can be inserted during the editing process or it can be done manually prior to the taping. It is acceptable to hold up a handwritten sign that states the category and title of piece.

Music Division Rules

1. All entries in the dance, drama and music divisions must be recorded after October 1, 2022.
2. Suggested length of performance - no longer than three minutes.
3. Judges reserve the right to move an entry to the appropriate category or disqualify the entry if rules are not followed.
4. Music entries must be recorded live. No voice-over dubbing will be allowed. No lip syncing to a pre-recorded track will be allowed.
5. A medley of songs in an entry must be continuous/overlapping. Editing video compilations or starting/stopping songs to combine multiple songs as one entry will not be allowed.
6. Once an entry has placed first in the music division at the national level of competition, it is not eligible to be entered again. (Example: If a Veteran or group places first with a music selection in a category one year at the national level, the Veteran or group may not enter that specific music selection again in the competition but he may enter that category again with a different music selection.) Music entries that have not placed first at the national level of competition should not be entered more than two consecutive years.
7. No restrictions or qualifications shall be placed on accompanists for musicians. However, **accompanists may only accompany and not take instrumental leads or solos**. There is no limit in the number of accompanists that may be utilized in an entry as long as they are only accompanying. A band of musicians may accompany a vocal solo, vocal group, instrumental solo or instrumental group. (Example: An instrumental group entry may consist of eligible Veterans taking leads on saxophone, trumpet and guitar accompanied by non-lead taking VA staff or volunteers on piano, drums and bass.)
8. An original composition may be placed in categories other than original. **It is required that original vocal entries also submit the typed lyrics along with their entry paperwork.**
9. The **addition of staff, volunteer(s), and/or Veterans who are not eligible Veterans to any entry other than as accompanists will result in disqualification.** *Although the National Veterans Creative Arts Program recognizes the therapeutic value of participation of staff, volunteers and ineligible Veterans in groups, it is essential in keeping with the fairness of the competition that **only eligible Veterans** are competing against each other.*
10. Only one voice may be present to be considered a solo. Once a second voice is added the **entry becomes a group entry and singers must meet eligibility requirements.** If back-up voices are present, they must be eligible Veteran inpatients or outpatients and their inclusion would make the entry a **Vocal Group**. Back-up singing by staff, volunteers, ineligible Veterans or karaoke will result in disqualification. Karaoke tapes must not include back-up singing but

must be instrumental accompaniment only. **Back-up tracks that have the Veteran's voice dubbed in, vocalizers, and harmonizers are not allowed.**

11. The presence of any vocalizations in an instrumental entry will eliminate that entry from competing in the instrumental category with the exception of Instrumental Drums/Percussion and the Band categories.
12. TITLE PAGE – Each entry must have a title page displayed prior to the entry being shown. The title page should include the Category and the Title of the Entry. The title page can be inserted during the editing process or it can be done manually prior to the taping. It is acceptable to hold up a handwritten sign that states the category and title of piece.

Note: VA staff contact persons will be notified via E-mail with the competition results.

Vocal Music Categories

- **Vocal Solo:** One Veteran singing.
- **Vocal Group:** To meet the intent of the categories for **Vocal Group**, the group must have **more than one eligible Veteran singing**. (Example: One eligible Veteran being accompanied on instruments by other eligible Veterans does not meet the definition of a vocal group. Instead, that would be a vocal solo with accompanists.)

VOCAL SOLO

1. **Vocal Solo Country/Folk/Bluegrass**
2. **Vocal Solo Pop**
3. **Vocal Solo Rock/Blues** – Examples: Eagles, Rolling Stones, Elvis Presley, Queen, BB King, Buddy Guy, etc.

VOCAL GROUP

4. **Vocal Group Country/Folk/Bluegrass**
5. **Vocal Group Pop**
6. **Vocal Group Rock/Blues**

VOCAL SOLO OR GROUP

7. **Vocal Rap/Hip Hop** – Solo or group.
8. **Vocal Classical/World/Ethnic** – Solo or group. A vocal selection that reflects the music characteristics of a specific ethnicity, culture, or country. The selection should be from a culture other than that of English-speaking North America. Use of ethnic instruments as accompaniment is encouraged. This category does NOT include popular music.
9. **Vocal Jazz** – Solo or group. Examples: Louis Armstrong, Billy Holliday, Fred Astaire, Tony Bennett, Norah Jones, Diana Krall, etc.
10. **Vocal R&B/Soul/Funk** – Solo or group. Examples: Motown, Sam Cooke, John Legend, Al Green, James Brown, etc.

11. **Vocal Broadway** – Solo or group. Show Tunes, **not movies**. (Example: “People” would be acceptable as it is **also** from a Broadway show, not because it is from a movie. “New York, New York” would not be acceptable as it is from a 1977 Liza Minnelli movie.) *Specify the Broadway show after the title.*
12. **Vocal Patriotic** – Solo or group.
13. **Vocal Spiritual** – Solo or group.

ORIGINAL VOCAL

Original vocal compositions composed by one or more eligible Veterans judged solely on the merits of the composition. Lyrics and music must be composed entirely by an eligible Veteran/s and that Veteran/s will be the one entered in this category. A performer or group other than the composer may perform the work, but the composer(s) should be shown on the video. **A copy of the typed lyrics must be attached to the entry form** to aid the judges in evaluating the lyrics. It is helpful to the judging process to also send lead sheets.

14. **Original Vocal - General Topic** – Solo or group.
15. **Original Vocal - Military Experience** – Solo or group.

Instrumental Music, Band, and Special Recognition Categories

- **Instrumental Solo:** One Veteran playing
- **Instrumental Group:** To meet the intent of the categories for **Instrumental Group**, the group must have **more than one eligible Veteran performing instrumental solos/leads or make other essential contributions musically to the entry other than just accompanying.** There are no limits to the number of accompanists in the group but care should be taken that non-eligible Veterans (i.e., staff, volunteers, Veterans who are not eligible to compete) are not performing solos/leads.

NOTE: The presence of any singing in an instrumental entry will eliminate that entry from competing in the instrumental category, with the exception of entries in the Instrumental Drums/Percussion and Band Categories.

INSTRUMENTAL SOLO

16. **Instrumental Solo Country/Folk/Bluegrass**
17. **Instrumental Solo Pop**
18. **Instrumental Solo Jazz/R&B/Soul**

INSTRUMENTAL GROUP

19. **Instrumental Group Country/Folk/Bluegrass**
20. **Instrumental Group Pop**
21. **Instrumental Group Jazz/R&B/Soul**

INSTRUMENTAL SOLO OR GROUP

- 22. **Instrumental Rock/Blues** – Solo or group.
- 23. **Instrumental Broadway** - Solo or group. Show Tunes, **not movies**. (Example: “People” would be acceptable as it is **also** from a Broadway show, not because it is from a movie. “New York, New York” would not be acceptable as it is from a 1977 Liza Minnelli movie.) *Specify the Broadway show after the title.*
- 24. **Instrumental Patriotic** - Solo or group.
- 25. **Instrumental Spiritual** - Solo or group.
- 26. **Instrumental Classical** - Solo or group. Conventional music following long-established principles other than a folk, jazz, or popular tradition (mid 1400s – late 1800s). Examples include symphonies, concertos, oratorios, operas, sonatas, fugues or any combination of dance movements such as suites. New age music may be submitted into this category.
- 27. **Instrumental World/Ethnic** - Solo or group. An instrumental selection that reflects the music characteristics of a special ethnicity, culture, or country. The selection should be from a culture other than that of English-speaking North America. Use of ethnic instruments is encouraged. This category does NOT include classical or popular music.
- 28. **Instrumental Drums/Percussion** - Solo or group. It is the intent of this category to showcase non-melodic percussion instruments, i.e. trap set, congas, bongos, spoons, rhythm instruments, etc. This category would exclude percussion instruments that can produce an obvious melody line, i.e. xylophone, vibraphone, marimba, etc. Accompaniment may be present as desired and may include melody line OR VOCALS, but **ONLY** the percussionist will be judged. **Vocal percussion beat boxing should be entered into this category.**

ORIGINAL INSTRUMENTAL

New score of music. A new song entirely, not an interpretation of an existing song. Original instrumental compositions composed by one or more eligible Veterans judged solely on the merits of the composition. Music must contain a distinct melody line and must be composed entirely by an eligible Veteran/s and that Veteran/s will be the one entered in this category. A performer or group other than the composer may perform the work, but the composer(s) should be shown on the video. Lead sheets and chord progressions are helpful to the judging process but are not required.

- 29. **Original Instrumental** - Solo or group.

BAND CATEGORIES

To meet the criteria for the Band categories, the group must consist entirely of eligible Veterans and must include **at least 3 members (one must be a singer and at least two instrumentalists)**. Each group member must offer a significant musical contribution to the group. Entries into this category will be judged by the overall performance of the entire group (vocalists and instrumentalists). All group members must be shown on the video.

30. **Band – Country/Folk/Bluegrass/Pop**

31. **Band – Jazz/R&B/Soul/Rock/Blues**

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

This category is for vocal or instrumental music entries that recognize individuals who exhibit creative expression through the use of music while possessing significant physical or psychological limitations. The intent of this category is to reinforce the concept of the arts as therapy, where an individual uses artistic expression to facilitate successful treatment outcomes.

32. **Special Recognition**

Entries in this special recognition categories **MUST** also include:

- **A Word document containing a typed statement/narrative** (50 to 250 words) composed by a VA staff person or the Veteran explaining why the Veteran is deserving of special recognition. **Entries submitted without a write-up will not be judged.**
- Consent form 10-3203 and 10-5345 (included in this handbook) must be signed and dated by the Veteran. The staff contact person submitting the entry for the Veteran should safeguard the signed consent forms at their VA facility.